



# Macomb Michigan State University Extension

## *Sharpening Our Program Focus*

### *Priority Concerns And Outcomes*

*2002 through 2005*

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# Assessing Educational Needs

## Introduction

Michigan State University Extension is an educational department of Michigan State University and Macomb County. Created through the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, Extension brings the knowledge and research of the University to the local community and applies it to locally identified needs. See mission. Extension is predominately publicly funded through federal, state and county tax dollars. In addition, grants and contracts are sought to help fund specific, targeted educational solutions which would otherwise go un-addressed.

MSUE staff and 18 Extension Council members conducted community assessments through a series of 7 focus groups from September 2000 to April 2001. Meetings sought input regarding county residents' needs and the possible role of Extension in meeting those needs through educational programming. In an effort to capture Macomb's diversity, invitations were extended to a broad spectrum of community sectors. They represented different professions, ages, incomes and ethnic groups. The illustration below highlights the variety of input sources.

### Sources of Input for MSUE Program Direction



Michigan State University Extension *helps people improve* their lives through an *educational Process* that *applies* knowledge to *critical issues*, needs and opportunities.

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This input along with community data and trends became the basis for the 2002—2005 strategic educational plan. The community assessment provided insight into the changing needs and trends of the county. Staff develop tailored educational programs that focus on timely issues. Over the next 3 years, Extension will use these focus group results to develop and evaluate ongoing community education programs.

In discussion with MSUE, community residents shared concerns in five major categories. As Extension developed its educational plan, the educational action response and expected impact in the community was identified. In sharing the results with you the format became **Concerns**, **Educational Response** and **Impact**. The five major categories are consistent with MSU linked research resources.

- Building Healthy Families
- Helping Youth Succeed
- Building a Healthy Environment
- Healthy Economic Development
- Building Healthy Communities

Issues of access and delivery also challenges the effectiveness and relevance of Extension programs . Extension educators continuously seek new methods, volunteers and media opportunities to expand and reach out. Our goal is

***Bringing Knowledge to Life***

# Building Healthy Families

## Concerns

Families in Macomb County can benefit from increased life skills from birth to death. Community assessments identified needs in budgeting, work responsibility, parent education and goal setting. County focus groups also identified parenting skills as a need. Macomb County Forum indicated “support is especially needed for both teen parents and single parents.” Families also need an improved diet to better their health and reduce the risk and results of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, osteoporosis and obesity. In addition, safe food practices from farm to table can reduce the risk and results of food borne illness. In 1997, Macomb County had 47,962 people below the poverty line, including 1 in 11 children and 6.5% of seniors. While all families are in need of improved life skills, those in poverty often have special challenges.

## Response

- **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program**—Target low-income families with education that focuses on nutrition, food budgeting and food preparation.
- **Family Nutrition Program**—Educate low-income seniors and developmentally disabled individuals about nutrition, budgeting and food preparation.
- **Seniors Program**—Link specific needs to community resources, financial issues, care-giver burnout and ways to stay healthier.
- **Osteoporosis Prevention Program**—Teach about diet supplementation and life-style changes that reduce and delay osteoporosis.
- **Food Safety Initiative**—Identify vulnerable food chain points where microbial food contamination can occur; teach practices that reduce food contamination and spoilage.
- **Building Strong Families**—Provide in-home parent education program for families with children aged birth to three focusing on discipline, child development, play and self esteem.
- **How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk**—Teach positive parenting and effective communication skills.
- **Rethink**—An anger management series teaching techniques to identify anger triggers, how to reduce anger and appropriate ways to express anger.
- **Parent to Parent**—Model sound parenting techniques through a volunteer based mentoring program for at-risk parents.
- **Money Management**—Develop better budgeting, credit, investing, insurance and estate financial planning skills.
- **Affordable Housing**—Prepare first-time home buyers for the mortgage application process.
- **Home and Yard Chemicals**—Teach and demonstrate appropriate use, effective storage and proper disposal of household chemicals to keep families safe.

## Impact

- **Healthier Diets**—1000 families practice good nutrition habits, including the consumption of high-fiber, low fat foods (adequate amounts of fresh fruits, vegetables and calcium) and the ability to prepare economically and nutritionally balanced meals.
- **Safe Food Handling Practices**—Handling practices for good sanitation, thereby avoiding cross contamination.
- **Positive Parenting**—Parents provide positive discipline and exhibit effective communication, keeping their families intact. Children live with parents or permanent guardians, parents are able to set and pursue goals.
- **Financial Management Skills**—Residents plan and adhere to monthly budget, pay bills on time, obtain credit and investments. Reduction of late payments and bankruptcy.
- **Affordable Housing**—People with low- to moderate-income become home owners, thus increasing wealth .
- **Safe Home Environment**—Proper use and storage of household chemicals, reducing injury and illness.

# Helping Youth Succeed

## Concerns

2000 Census figures indicate that the population of Macomb County youth aged 5 to 17 is 138,722. This figure represents 18% of the total population; of that, almost 20% live in single parent households. Ten percent live in poverty. Youth need positive experiences to help them gain skills and knowledge they need to be successful. Community needs assessment identified the following needs: opportunities for youth to develop life and leadership skills, participate in safe, out-of-school programs and engage in community service. Youth need positive adult role models to help them navigate their way through adolescence and beyond, as well as an environment that is conducive to promoting developmental assets.

## Responsibilities

- **4-H Clubs**—Recruit, train and maintain an on-going commitment to adult and teen volunteers who lead youth groups that promote hands-on, experiential learning in over 100 project areas for youth ages 5 through 19.
- **Youth Mentor/Court/Drug Court Mentor Programs**—Provide one-on-one trained volunteer adult mentoring and life skills training for youth referred from FIA/Juvenile Court and Drug Court with weekly contacts for six months.
- **Community Mentor Development**—MSUE partners with schools, churches and agencies to develop community based mentoring programs through training and technical assistance.
- **Youth Gardening**—Train adult and teen volunteers in proper gardening methods and teaching techniques for re-teaching to community, after school and other youth groups.
- **Community Service Learning**—Tie community service projects to educational programs designed to create greater understanding of social/economic/environmental problems.
- **Hispanic Youth Initiative**—Offer summer day camp that provides educational and recreational opportunities exploring community resources and enhancing literacy.
- **Life Skills, Career/Leadership Development**—Strengthen leadership, life skills and career opportunities for youth through experiences and specific research based activities.
- **Great Lakes Education**—Partner with 4th grade classrooms and their parents to educate and experience the ecology, beauty and problems with this our greatest natural resource throughout their year, culminating in a river and lake cruise.
- **National and International Experiences**—Expose youth to different cultures and travel like 4H National Congress experience, Nepal Water Quality monitoring, China and Japanese Art exchange.
- **Youth Family Nutrition Program**—Provide classroom, after school and summer group education to youth ages 5 to 17 in the area of good nutrition and the importance of physical activity.

## Impact

- **Positive Adult Relationships**—300 adult volunteers mentor, teach and guide youth in learning social, recreational and life skills.
- **Leadership Skills**—Youth will be leaders in clubs, groups and community activities and serve as the voice of youth within our community.
- **Safe Out of School Programs**—Increase safe and accessible after school and summer programs that promote experiential learning.
- **Community Service**—Youth contribute to their community through service and educational projects.
- **Family Nutrition Program**—Youth choose healthier snacks, diets and increase participation in physical activities.
- **Environmental Stewardship**—3000 youth experience the Clinton River and Lake St. Clair, water testing, ecological habitats and bottom life.

# Healthy Economic Development

## Concerns

The Macomb County Extension Council, focus groups, grassroots organizations and many others have identified the loss of farmland and related environmental issues as high priority. Agricultural producers are under extreme pressure to sell their farms for development, thus losing open space and the economic contribution of these enterprises. The traditional wholesale vegetable industry is particularly at risk because these farms are situated in townships that are rapidly developing. Selling prices are poor due to out-of-state competition and imports; input costs are rising. Growers struggle to find alternatives that add value, attract and hold labor and develop new markets for new products.

Working parents need childcare. Over 900 businesses care for some 26,000 children in Macomb County. These businesses are challenged with high employee turnover, low wages, long hours and minimal benefits. Reliable, available childcare is critical to maintaining employee productivity.

## Responsibilities

- **Agriculture and “Green Industry” Management**—Assist businesses with regulation compliance, labor and marketing practices and risk management.
- **Agriculture and Green Industry Production Assistance**—Provide technical assistance through research that addresses key issues and problem diagnosis.
- **Integrated Plant Health Care**—Teach lawn, landscape, municipal personnel and business grounds-keepers about maintaining healthy landscapes.
- **Master Gardener and Advanced Master Gardener Program**—Certify and help qualify participants for vocations and jobs after completing volunteer service.
- **Child Care Resource and Referral**—Link parents to quality licensed child care providers, enabling parents to join the workforce and be productive at their jobs.
- **Child Care Business Seminars**—Provide a wide realm of technical and practical training for child care professionals.
- **Home Buyers**—Identify the key players, their roles and mortgage options in the most significant financial purchase of a family or individual.
- **Home Maintenance and Repair**—Teach people with little experience to complete basic repairs and general home maintenance.
- **Gardening Hotline**—Answer citizens’ questions on the best, most economical, environmentally friendly practices to manage gardens, lawns, landscapes, interior plants or pest problems.

## Impact

- **Jobs/Vocations**—Increase technical skills and knowledge that builds community capacity.
- **Agricultural Businesses**—Growers will adopt practices that reduce economic risk and increase profitability. Pesticide operators will improve effectiveness while adopting environmentally sound practices.
- **Lawn Care Industries**—Businesses will increase profitability and customer satisfaction.
- **Productive Employees**—Increase productivity through greater knowledge and skills. Increase general employee attendance (fewer cases of absenteeism) due to children being in stable, safe child care homes and centers.
- **Available Child Care**—More profitable businesses with safer environments, responsible discipline practices, implementing age appropriate learning activities to maximize the growth of children in care.
- **Home Buyers**—People with low- to moderate-incomes save money and maintain the value of their homes. Communities protect housing stock and enhance neighborhoods.



# Healthy Environment

## Concerns

Land use, water quality and environmental education were identified as the top issues facing the county in the natural resources program areas. These issues impact all Macomb County residents economically, socially and physically and on many levels. Since 1994, Macomb County has experienced significant water quality problems, resulting in numerous beach closings. Pollution of our water comes from a variety of sources, including CSO's, SSO's, improper lawn care practices, agricultural and development runoff and airborne deposition. Over the past decade, the county has experienced phenomenal growth, particularly in the northern communities. Since the 1990 census figures were taken, several townships have increased in population 11-122%. These population increases impact our land, water and air resources. Many of these communities are not prepared for this rapid development and lack the necessary tools to accommodate planned, environmentally sensitive growth.

## Response

- **Citizen Planner**—Train local officials, Planning and ZBA members and citizens on tools and techniques for better land use planning at the local level.
- **Master Composter and Gardener**—Train volunteers to deliver education to residents on the best methods of lawn, garden and home environment management.
- **Water Quality Education for Youth and Adults**—Provide variety of programs on water issues, including groundwater, conservation and wellhead protection monitoring.
- **Fertilizer Education**—Provide research and education for homeowners, landscape professionals, agricultural producers and golf courses regarding non-polluting nutrient management practices.
- **Integrated Pest Management**—Educate and train residents and pesticide applicators on most economical, effective and least toxic methods of pest control.
- **Pesticide Applicator Training**—Educational programs pertaining to certification of agricultural producers and commercial pesticide applicators.
- **Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program**—Grant program to provide education, cost share and research and demonstration activities related to groundwater, fertilizer and pesticide use.
- **Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program**—Increase knowledge and community action in environmental protection through educational series on various environmental issues.

## Impact

- **Water Quality**—Adults and youth protect and conserve local ground and surface water resources.
- **Land Use**—Local officials and citizens have knowledge of laws and tools to implement improved land use practices. Officials will communicate across unit boundaries to accomplish land use goals. Volunteers will enhance and increase green spaces in their communities.
- **Fertilizer/Pesticide Use**—Homeowners, agricultural producers, turf grass and landscape professionals adopt the most effective and economical pest control and nutrient management practices with maximum attention to environmental impact and human safety.
- **Community Involvement**—500 volunteers work in their communities improving resource conservation, preventing pollution, facilitating community beautification and developing creative opportunities for youth to increase their skills, knowledge and abilities.

# Building Healthy Communities

## Concerns

Macomb County communities are in transition. While established cities have lost an average of 7.5% in population, others have increased as much as 122%. Older communities need neighborhood and business revitalization. Growing areas experience rapid, disconnected growth. As a result, citizens do not feel connected to their communities and are unaware of and underutilize community resources. Recent MSUE Focus groups expressed the need for more green and open space in suburban communities, assistance to underserved populations and increased opportunities for youth and senior adult interaction. 2000 census data shows increases in the senior (22% increase) and minority (4.4% increase) populations. As Macomb County's population continues to diversify, communities need to deepen their understanding and appreciation of different cultures to enrich and enhance the community's quality of life.

## Response

- **Community Beautification**—Trained volunteers adopt sites in their neighborhoods for beautification or renovation.
- **Neighborhood Green Space Enhancement**—Train residents to improve an older neighborhood through leadership and collaborative efforts.
- **Public Policy**—Offer elected local officials and citizens information on existing and pending legislation, democratic processes and local government structure.
- **Diversity Program**—Create awareness of diversity and demonstrate the benefits of inclusion.
- **Poverty Simulation**—Create awareness of the challenges of limited resource families and sensitize participants through experiential learning
- **Leadership Macomb**—MSUE supports this collaborative development program for local business people and professionals focusing on the assets and opportunities in Macomb County.
- **Citizen Opinion Survey of Land Use Issues**—An MSUE survey of northern Macomb community residents to identify land use issues in their community.
- **Migrant and Seasonal Worker Roundtable**—Bring health care and employment agencies together with employers to improve delivery of services to migrant workers.
- **Exotic Invaders**—Educate residents and elected officials about the economic, environmental, and aesthetic impact of destructive exotic invaders, such as Emerald Ash Borer, Gypsy Moth and Zebra Mussels.

## Impact

- **Community Enhancement**—Adults and youth will improve neighborhoods through the development of green and open space, gardens and neighborhood clean ups; resulting in recreational and gathering places building community connective-ness or cohesiveness.
- **Informed Officials**—Will exhibit improved leadership, community planning, vision and skills that match constituent input.
- **Diverse Communities**—Will involve more diverse audiences in needs assessment, program planning and reach more under served.
- **Poverty**—Communities will support changes in practices that inhibit limited resource residents and prioritize needed services that encourage inclusion and access.
- **Leadership Skills**—Officials and residents will use new knowledge and skills to develop master plans with constituent input.
- **Prepared Communities**—Will be better able to combat exotic pest infestation and reduce the various negative impact of developing issues through integrated planning and intra-community communication to resolve issues in their communities.

# Strengthening Macomb MSU Extension

## Concerns

Extension volunteers and program recipients often express that **“Extension is the best kept secret in town.”** With 800,000 residents, it is difficult to reach and adequately provide educational opportunities to citizens. Increasing outreach, expanding marketing efforts and acquiring *diverse* input are tasks that continuously challenge Extension educators as the county grows. These efforts are especially vital as the face of the Macomb County changes; its residents age, become more ethnicity diverse and varied in education- and income-levels.

## Response

- Recruit and train volunteers.
- Increase accessibility and utilization of Programs and Services.
- Increase broad range of representation and involvement in Planning and Programs.
- Expand programs through media and grant opportunities.

## Impact

- Flexible programming that fits the changing needs of the community.
- Active, diverse program planning committees and Extension Council.
- Multiple program offerings in various locations, times and delivery opportunities.
- Broader public awareness of Extension programming in Macomb County.
- Use of trained volunteers to assist in addressing community needs.



**MSUE would like to  
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